



Pittsburgh
Healthcare System
Heinz ★ Highland Drive ★ University Drive

Working Together

Summer 2003

Issue Thirteen

VAPHS Nurses-
The foundation of quality care

A Message from the Director



Glenn Hangard

When I am walking around inpatient units and outpatient areas at each of our three divisions, I am routinely stopped by veterans and family members who want to tell me personally about the great care that they receive at the VAPHS.

A recent patient satisfaction survey at all three divisions revealed that the percentage of our outpatients, who reported the overall quality of care as very good or excellent, was above the national average. Veterans also rated our CBOC's above average regarding overall quality of care, wait times, and ability to get an appointment when needed. These are just two of the outstanding results the VAPHS received from recent reviews.

Our mission of providing the best possible care and assistance to our veteran patients could not be accomplished without the professionalism and dedication of all VA Pittsburgh employees.

This summer issue of **Working Together** features a salute to our Nurses, opening of a new Renal Dialysis Unit, various patient safety and performance improvement initiatives, appointment of our Chief Fiscal Officer and our "Performance vital signs." It also spotlights the many outstanding achievements and awards that our staff has received in the past quarter.

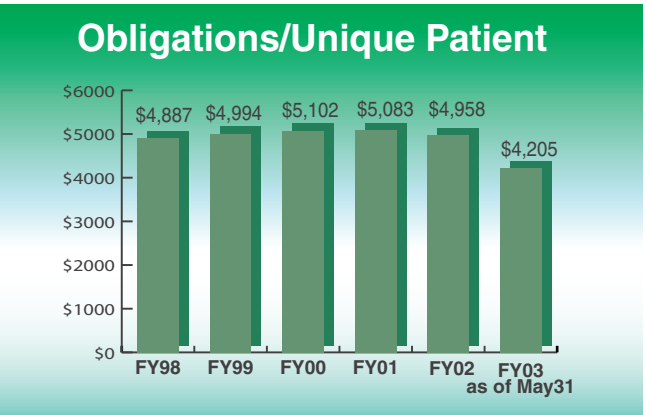
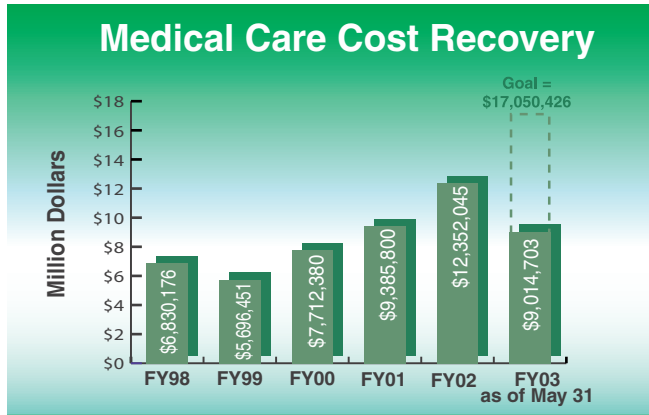
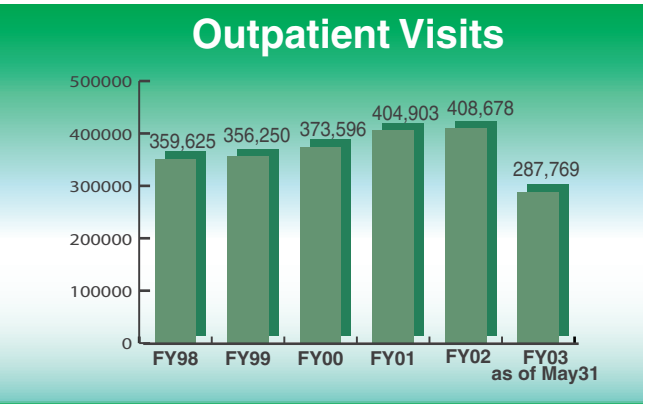
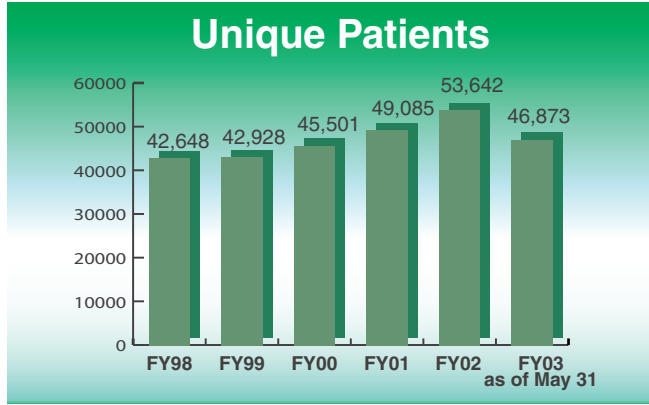
Michael E. Moreland
Director
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

*Dear Fellow Employees,
Volunteers, Veterans and
Friends of the VA,*

I believe that in order to accomplish the highest quality of health care, a strong emphasis must be placed on achieving patient satisfaction. We are constantly measuring the satisfaction of our veteran patients and their family members and diligently working to improve our results. Results indicate that the VAPHS is doing an exemplary job of satisfying our patients.

I regularly receive numerous positive complimentary letters, e-mails, and phone calls from veteran patients and family members who want to express their satisfaction with the high quality of care that they receive at the VAPHS.

Performance Vital Signs



State-of-the-Art Dialysis Unit Opened

A new Renal Dialysis Unit was recently dedicated at the University Drive Division to better serve hemodialysis and home peritoneal dialysis patients.

The main hemodialysis room provides 14 patient stations that are operated by a new and improved computer system and can comfortably serve inpatients and outpatients. The unit is also equipped with a state-of-the art water purification system to provide the highest degree of safety to hemodialysis patients. The VAPHS Renal Dialysis Unit has been a National Clinical Program of Excellence since 1997.



7E Dialysis Unit,
inpatient area



Above: 7E Dialysis Unit ribbon cutting ceremony held April 16, 2003.

Left to right:
Dr. Thakor Patel, Chief Renal Diseases, VACO
Terry Gerigk, Associate Director, VAPHS
Lawrence Biro, Director, VISN 4
Michael E. Moreland, Director, VAPHS
Dr. Paul Palevsky, Chief, Renal, VAPHS



7E Dialysis Unit,
outpatient area
Nurse Manager,
Carol Terry, RN

Warren Park

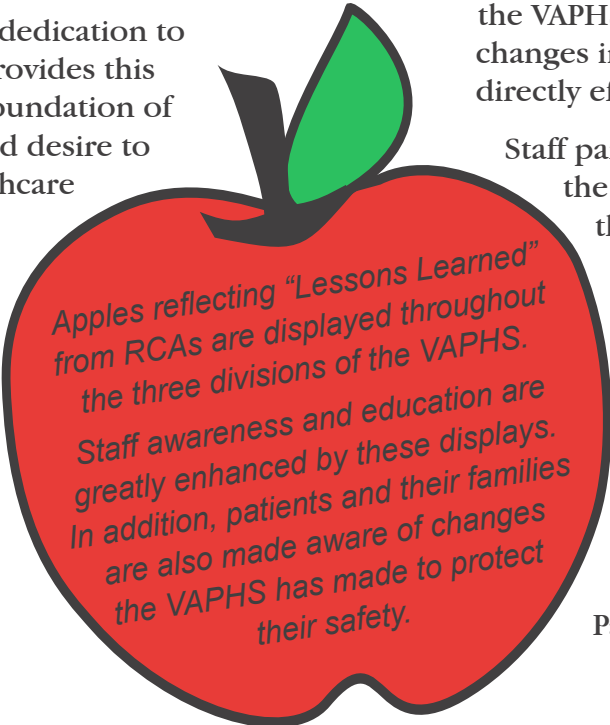
Quality & Patient Safety at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

The efforts of this unit are guided by Ms. Barbara Reichbaum, MSN, RN, Program Manager and supported administratively by Carla J. Blank, Program Specialist, and Tori Walker, Program Assistant. The strong support and commitment from Leadership at the VAPHS enhances the positive outcomes of this unit and promotes a significant move toward better patient care.

The Office of Quality & Patient Safety at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System coordinates overall Quality Performance. Patient Safety, Accreditation, Performance Measures and the Occurrence Screening process are some of the elements included in Q&PS's wide scope of activities.

Reorganized in 2001, this unit of nine VAPHS staff members offers many collective years of clinical and administrative experience, leadership abilities, and organizational skill toward improving the level of quality patient care, patient safety and recognition of positive outcomes.

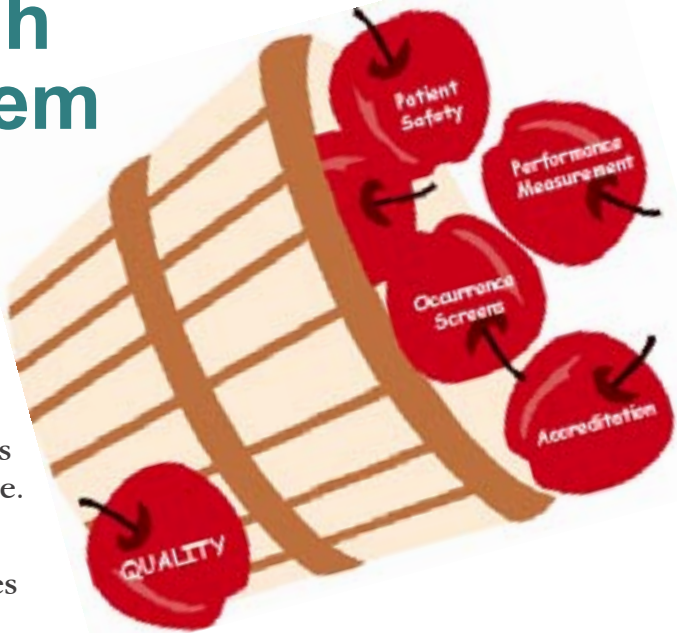
A high level of dedication to our veterans provides this group with a foundation of compassion and desire to drive this healthcare system to an optimum level of performance.



HFMEA (Healthcare Failure Modes and Effect Analyses)

A more complex and objective review is also performed on systems issues. In the last few months, specialized staff at the VAPHS have participated in HFMEA reviews on: Interfacility transfers; prevention of pressure ulcers in

Home Care patients; and BCMA. Numerous enhancements of these processes have been implemented, guided and motivated by the expertise and innovative thinking of the Patient Safety Staff and the teams they advise.



Patient Safety

The focus of Patient Safety has been strengthened throughout the VA System the last several years. VA Pittsburgh stepped up early-on and, with strong leadership support, has elevated the effectiveness and awareness of patient safety initiatives to an invaluable level. Through Root Cause Analyses (RCA), Quarterly Aggregate Reviews and Healthcare Failure Modes and Effect Analyses (HFMEA), the VAPHS has implemented many positive changes in policies and procedures that directly effect the welfare of our patients.

Staff participating in RCAs and HFMEAs at the VAPHS should take great pride in their contributions toward providing a better environment for our patients.

Patient Safety Staff include:

Barbara Forsha, MSN, RN
Lead Patient Safety Manager

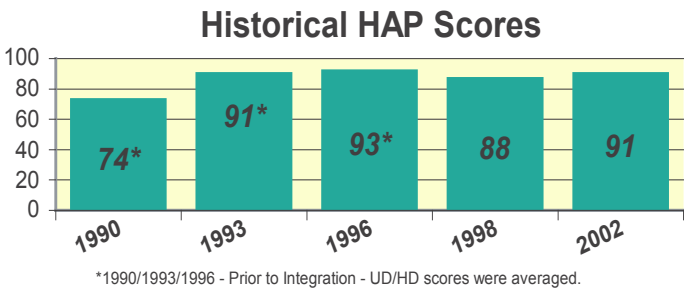
Mary Boburczak
Patient Safety Coordinator

Susan Sunday, RN
Patient Safety Coordinator

JCAHO 2002 Success

The readiness efforts of Q&PS assisted the healthcare system in acquiring JCAHO accreditation after a successful survey, October 2002. Readiness Groups, Environmental Rounds, Quality Fairs, "The Bridge," E-mail Countdown Messages, Mock Surveys, Canteen Coupons all led to the Grand Finale of excellent scores in all program areas and over \$130,000 in employee recognition awards!

Accreditation efforts are supported by Mr. Joel Holloway, Program Specialist.



2002 JCAHO Scores	
HAP	91
HBPC/HME.....	93
LTC	98
Addictions	99
Behavioral Health	98

Technical & Perceived Quality

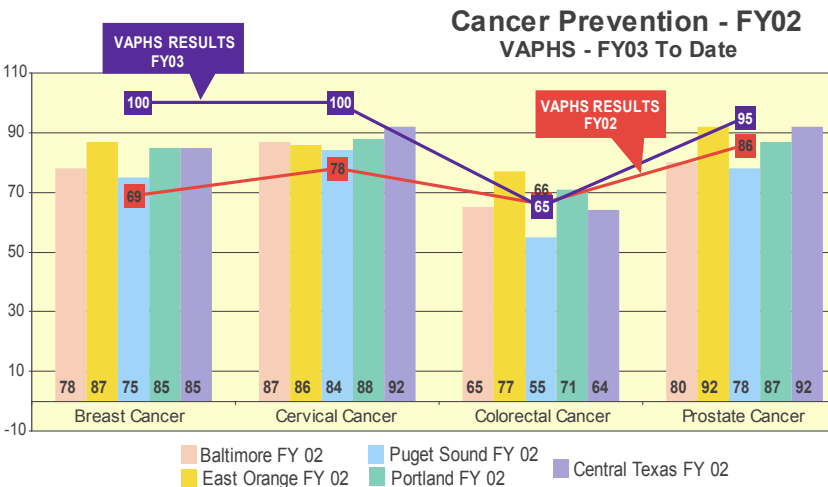
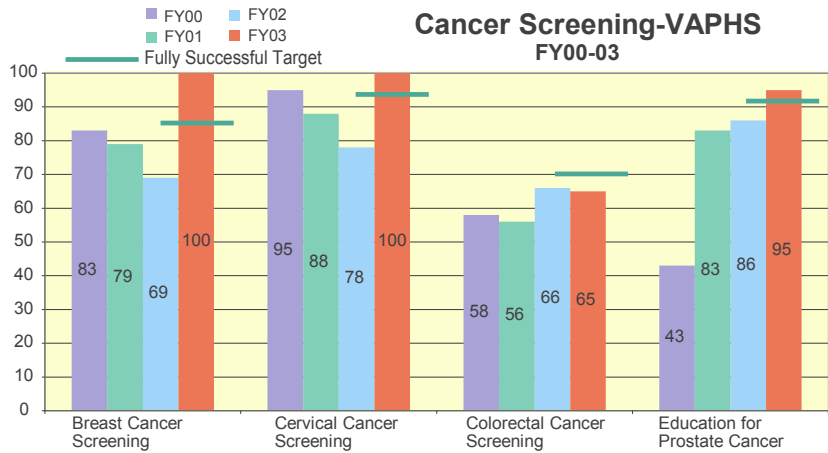
VA nationally has taken great strides to provide quality patient care, while also being cost effective and customer friendly. Our performance is evaluated and analyzed at local, network, and national levels. In addition, comparison studies are performed between the VA National averages and community standards. This is a "DATA-DRIVEN" system, and many steps are taken by the Technical & Perceived Quality staff to ensure that our performance is accurately measured and that the results are accessible for appropriate corrective action. Clinical reminders, automated templates, brain-storming sessions are some things the Q&PS staff members have contributed to the performance data system.

Technical Quality Presentations have been managed by this section of Q&PS and have allowed the VAPHS to be a best practice in the network for many elements of healthcare.

The Adverse Events & Procedures Review Board and Occurrence Screening was assumed by this unit. Mr. Ichesco offers the unit a vast knowledge base of complex clinical reviews and Ms. Czarnecki's diverse clinical and informatics background has contributed significantly to this process. The meeting format has been streamlined while allowing efficient and thorough fact-finding of clinical issues.

Technical & Perceived Quality staff include:
Tammy Czarnecki, MSN, RN and
Gerhard Ichesco, RN.

VAPHS cancer screening scores continue to compare positively to other VAs of comparable size and complexity!



Police Dog Bax Protects VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System



Bax is an eight-year-old German Shepherd who lives and works with VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) Police Detective Greg Johnson. At the age of two, Bax was purchased by the VAPHS from a kennel in New York who had imported him from Czechoslovakia and trained him. After a little more training by the City of Pittsburgh Police Canine School to work with Detective Johnson, Bax has been serving the VAPHS for six years as a dual purpose police patrol dog. Bax specializes in narcotics detection, sniffing out cocaine, marijuana, and heroin, and he also searches for missing people and apprehends criminals.



Take Your Child to Work Day 2003

Sixty-eight youths between the ages of ten and eighteen participated in the first-ever organized Take Your Child To Work Day in April. All three divisions hosted special activities in hopes of attracting volunteers and future healthcare workers. The participants' favorite activities of the day were touring the hospitals, spending time with veterans and active duty speakers, and learning CPR.



Spotlight on James Baker



Mr. James Baker was recently appointed as the Chief Financial Officer for the VAPHS.

Prior to this appointment, Mr. Baker served as the Fiscal Officer for several years. Mr. Baker has been working at the VA for over 21 years. Other positions Mr. Baker has held during his career include; Assistant Fiscal Officer, Operating Accountant, and Budget Analyst. He received an Associate Degree from Community College of Allegheny and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Robert Morris University. Mr. Baker has been married to his wife Carole for fourteen years and they have two daughters, Stephanie and Alissa.

Congratulations

Employees with 20 years
or more of service!

The employees listed have reached a benchmark in their years of government service during the period **January - March 2003**

James J. Davis	Clinical Support	30
John M. Gazda	Clinical Support	30
Valerie Hawkins	Clinical Support	30
James R. Lang, Jr.	Facilities Management	30
Mary A. Pollice	Medical Specialty	30
Lynda Lee South	Community Based Care	30
Judy L. Blessley	Clinical Support	25
Rosemary Grealish	Clinical Support	25
Susan J. Kardish	Human Resources	25
Charlotte K. Baloh	Business Services	20
William E. Boyle	VISN	20
Karen E. Godino	Human Resources	20
Thomas A. Miele	Police Service	20
Janet E. Stout	Clinical Support	20
Kathleen A. Totef	Patient Care Services	20
Alfred M. Vogel, Jr.	Surgical Specialty	20
Burke Webb	Facilities Management	20

US Congressman Tim Murphy visits the VAPHS on May 29 and compliments staff on the high quality of patient care that he observed



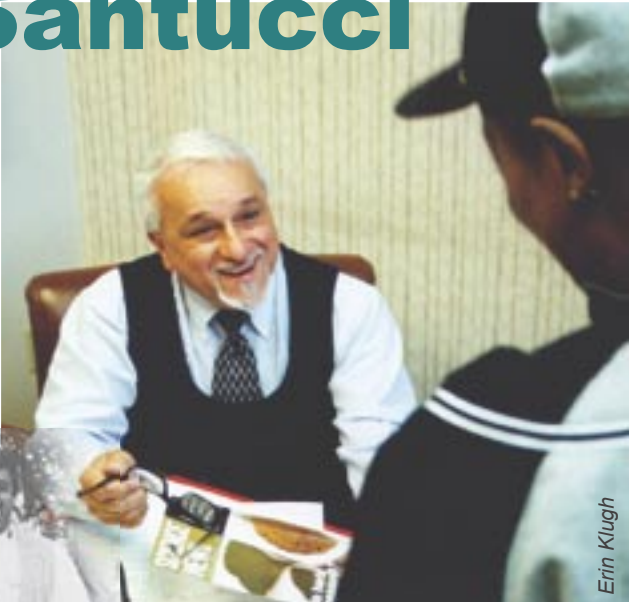
VAPHS Nurse Practitioner Frank Santucci

Providing the best possible care for veterans at the VAPHS for over 41 years

Frank Santucci is the VAPHS nurse with the most years of service. He also has the second highest number of years of service out of the 2900 person VAPHS workforce! He began working at the Highland Drive Division in 1962 as a nursing assistant where he also served as an R.N. before becoming a Nurse



Frank circa 1979



Erin Klugh

Practitioner. Providing the best possible care for veterans is very important to Frank, who is a veteran himself. “I want to give something back. I’m paying it forward, paying my dues. I’ve really enjoyed working here,” says Frank of his many years of dedicated service.



University Drive
Pittsburgh, PA
15240

1-866-482-7488

Check out our Website at:

www.va.gov/pittsburgh

Michael E. Moreland
Director

Terry Gerigk
Associate Director

Rajiv Jain, MD
Chief of Staff

The VA Pittsburgh Working Together
is published for the employees, volunteers, patients, and friends of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. To submit articles, editorials, letters, or story ideas for possible inclusion, please contact **David Cowgill** at **412-688-6224**.

Editor
David E. Cowgill
Public & Community Relations
Coordinator

Design & Layout
Erin L. Klugh

Photography
Warren Park
Glenn Hangard

cover photos:
Glenn Hangard